

5 TITLE: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PLANTING SEED IN A SEED
RESEARCH PLOT

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional
10 Application No. 60/432,361, filed December 10, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Planters for seed research plots are used to select from
different groups of seeds for planting in a short segment of
15 a row, and thence stop the planting in the first segment and
to select sequentially seed from another group until a
plurality of segments of a row (or more) are planted with
seeds from different groups. The seeds from each group
represent different types and characteristics of corn seed,
20 for example.

One of the most significant shortcomings of existing
planters is that they require a plurality of control systems
to accommodate the various functional requirements such as
stopping and starting the flow of seed, the coordination of
25 seed inlets and outlets, the contamination of seed groups and
the elimination of extra seed. Such existing planters are
very expensive to manufacture, maintain, and service.

It is therefore a principal object of this invention to
provide a method and means for planting seeds in a seed
30 research plot.

A further object of this invention is to provide a
method and apparatus for planting seed in a seed research
plot which can control the various phases of seed handling
with a single control system.

35 A still further object of this invention is to provide a
method and apparatus for planting seed in a seed research

5 plot which is inexpensive to manufacture, and economical to maintain and service.

These and other objects will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A seed meter for planting seeds includes a seed plate rotatably mounted within a housing. A rotary seed chamber (RSC) is mounted in the housing adjacent the seed plate and movable between first and second positions, to permit the
15 seed plate to singularly select individual seeds from the RSC while in a first position, and to dump seed therefrom as well as blocking seeds from entering the seed plate while in a second position. A seed intake compartment having an inlet end, and a discharge end is located adjacent the RSC. A
20 valve is located in the intake compartment to intermittently prevent seed from flowing from the inlet end to the discharge end. A power means actuates both the RSC and the valve. A wing plate on the rotary seed chamber opens and closes the discharge end as the rotary seed chamber is in its first and
25 second positions, respectively.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a first side of a seed planter made according to this invention;

30 Fig. 2 is a side elevational view of the device of Fig. 1 with the first side cover removed;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a second side of the seed planter of Fig. 1, in a first phase of its operation;

Fig. 4 is a view similar to that of Fig. 3 but in a
35 second stage of its operation;

Fig. 5 is a view similar to that of Fig. 4 but in a third stage of its operation;

Fig. 6 is a side elevational view of a second side of the seed planter of Fig. 1;

Fig. 7 is a view similar to that of Fig. 6 but in a different stage of operation; and

Figs. 8 & 9 are perspective views of the rotating seed chamber taken at various angles, with Fig. 8 showing one side, and Fig. 9 showing the other side.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference to Fig. 1, a seed meter 10 has a housing 12 with a rotatable shaft 14 (Fig. 2) extending into the housing. Housing 12 has a front cover 16 (Fig. 1) and a rear cover 18 (Fig. 3). The rear cover 18 has an excess seed discharge opening 19.

With reference to Figs. 1 and 2, the housing includes a conventional circular seed plate 20 which is mounted on shaft 14 and has a plurality of conventional seed apertures 22 which are subjected to a vacuum environment for a portion of its circumference as will be discussed hereafter. A conventional vacuum port 24 is in housing 12 (Fig. 1) to accommodate this situation. A conventional seed singulator 26 is mounted in housing 12 immediately adjacent seed plate 20 to perform its conventional function of limiting the number of seeds to a single seed (picked up by the apertures 22 on seed plate 20). The seed singulator 26 is produced by Case-International, Inc. and does not, per se, comprise a part of this invention.

With reference to Figs. 5, and 8-9, a fill tube port 28 is located in the top of fill tube changer 30 which has an exit port 31 (Fig. 6) in the bottom thereof which is in communication with a V-shaped rotary seed chamber (RSC) 32. The RSC, shown best in Figs. 8-9, has outwardly spaced arms 34 creating a seed compartment 35 therebetween and which has

5 an inclined flow groove 36 adjacent the inner arms 34. The RSC has first side 38 (Fig. 9) and a second side 40 (Fig. 8). A wing or plate 42 forms a part of the second side 40 and extends outwardly from the seed compartment 35. A hex-shaped bore 44 appears in the second side 40 (Fig. 9).

10 With reference to Figs. 3-5, an air piston 46 is mounted to the rearward side of the housing 12 and has a conventional piston rod 48 extending outwardly therefrom. The piston 46 is double acting so as to reciprocate the movement of the rod 48. The outer end of the piston rod 48 is pivotally secured
15 to shaft 50 and to one end of link 52. The end of shaft 50 opposite link 52 extends into the housing 12 and terminates in a hex-shaped end (not shown) which is compatible with the hex-shaped bore 44 of RSC 32 so that the rotation of the shaft 50 will coordinate with the rotation of the RSC. A rod
20 54 is pivotally secured to the end of link 52 opposite to its connection to piston rod 48 and extends upwardly to be secured to one end of a flapper valve crank 56. The flapper valve 56 has its opposite end pivotally secured to the outside of fill tube chamber 30 and extends therein to
25 control the position of a flat flapper valve plate 57 which is adapted to pivot between a horizontal closed position (Fig. 3) to a downwardly extending open position (Fig. 4), depending on the position of the flapper valve crank 56.

As will be discussed hereafter, the housing 12 has a
30 planting seed discharge port 58 (Fig. 2), through which seeds from the seed plate 20 are ultimately disengaged for delivery to a conventional planting assembly (not shown).

In operation, the planter upon which the seed meter 10 is mounted has a plurality of groups of seeds that are to be
35 planted sequentially in a given row in conjunction with a controller (not shown) operatively connected to the meter 10 to control the sequential delivery of the individual groups

5 of seed to the meter 10. The controller limits the number of
seeds from each group which are in fact to be planted by
controlling the operation of air cylinder 46. Such a planter
will plant a plurality of rows at one time with a seed meter
10 associated with the planting of each row. The following
description will apply to the sequence of events which takes
place in the planting of each row.

With reference to Fig. 3, the piston rod 48 is in its
retracted position wherein the flapper valve 56 in fill tube
chamber 30 is in a horizontal closed position. Rotational
15 motion is provided to shaft 14 in a conventional manner.
Typically, the planter will be set up to plant a first number
of seeds from a first group of seeds, and then will
automatically stop the planting of the first group of seeds
and will instantaneously introduce seeds from a second group
20 into the system. Typically, the individual seeds will be
planted five to six inches apart and each segment of planted
seeds in a given row could be in the general range of two
feet long or up to 25 feet or so. The planting format for a
given row is imposed on the controller which actuates air
25 cylinder 46 consistent with the planting strategy.

The system will deliver a first quantity of seeds from a
first group into the chamber 30 via port 28. The closed
flapper valve 56 will not permit the seed to be dropped to
the bottom of the chamber 30. The controller then actuates
30 the piston 46 to cause the piston rod 48 to move from the
position of Fig. 3 through the position of Fig. 4 to the
position of Fig. 5 which permits the seed in the chamber 30
to drop to the bottom thereof.

While the piston 46 is in the position of Fig. 5, the
35 RSC 32 is in a position such that the wing 42 closes the seed
exit 31 of the seed chamber 30 because the compartment 35 is
in a dumping position (Fig. 7) wherein any excess seed

5 existing therein falls by gravity outwardly through the seed discharge opening 19. Additionally, in the position shown in Fig. 7, the RSC 32 acts as a wiper to dislodge remaining seeds from the seed plate 20.

10 However, when the piston 46 is moved to the position of Fig. 3 the seed chamber 32 rotates in an upwardly direction, the wing 42 opens seed exit 31 and seed is permitted then to flow into the compartment 35 of the RSC 32 (Fig. 6). At that time, the seed plate 20 and vacuum port 24 of the meter 10 begin to pick up individual seeds from the compartment 35.

15 Slightly downstream from the RSC 32, the seed singulator 26 "knocks off" additional seeds clinging to each aperture 22 in the event that more than one seed is held in place on the seed plate 20. The seed plate 20 then rotates from approximately an 11 o'clock position as shown in Fig. 2 to a

20 3 o'clock position wherein the selected individual seeds are removed from the seed plate 20 by conventional means and discharged into the planting mechanism through the discharge port 58.

When the predetermined number of seeds have been removed

25 from the compartment 35 of the RSC 32 by the seed plate 20, the controller then actuates the cylinder 46 to move the piston rod 48 from the position of Fig. 3 back to the position of Fig. 5. This causes the flapper valve 56 to open, as discussed above, as the wing 42 closes the discharge

30 port 31 of the chamber 30 (Fig. 7). The second group of seed is then staged at the wing 42 directly adjacent the seed plate 20 for the next set of plantings, and the sequence of events is repeated so that individual seeds from a second group of seeds are picked up and then deposited for planting.

35 It is therefore seen that the entire operation of seed selection, the beginning of the planting sequence, the ending of the planting sequence, and the commencement of the

5 planting system for a second group of seeds is controlled by
a single controller which automatically commands the entire
sequence of events. Thus, the device of this invention is
economically manufactured, and the maintenance burden and
servicing burden is substantially minimized. It is thus seen
10 that this invention will achieve all of its stated
objectives.